

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the Office Action of January 6, 2009 is respectfully requested.

By this Amendment, claims new claims 38-40 have been added. Thus, claims 18-25, 27-30 and 32-40 are currently pending in the application. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for his courtesy in granting and conducting the telephone interview of April 16, 2009. Specific portions of the interview will be referred to in the following discussion.

On pages 2-3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 18-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Tureman, Jr. (US 2,435,614). Further, on pages 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 22 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tureman in view of Maeda (US 4,364,593). For the reasons discussed below, it is respectfully submitted that the present claims are clearly patentable over the prior art of record.

Independent claim 18 recites a multi-joint drive mechanism comprising *a flat-plate bone-member layer member in which a plurality of flat plate bone members are arranged in arrays, with each of the flat plate bone members having at least one recessed portion, the plurality of bone members being movably coupled at coupling portions, and the coupling portions comprising flat plates*. Further, the multi-joint drive mechanism of claim 18 includes elastic members which are arranged so as to stretch over the coupling portions on at least one of a contact-surface side of the bone-member layer member that is to make contact with an object and a noncontact-surface side of the bone-member layer member opposed to the contact-surface side, *with the elastic members being fitted into the recessed portions of adjacent ones of the bone members so as to be fixed to the adjacent ones of the bone members*, and the elastic members being capable of being elastically expanded and contracted. In addition, claim 18 recites that the multi-joint drive mechanism is operable to drive flexural motions with the coupling portions between adjoining bone members serving as joints by expanding or contracting the elastic members, and that the multi-joint drive mechanism has a layer structure in which at least the flat-plate bone-member layer member and the elastic members are arranged in a planar fashion.

Tureman discloses an artificial hand which, as shown in Figs. 1 and 2, includes a

plurality of tubular members 18 held together by screws 19, and control cables 33 extending through the tubular members 18 for flexing the fingers of the artificial hand.

In this regard, on pages 2-3 of the Office Action, the Examiner provides comments regarding how the features of claim 18 are disclosed by Tureman. However, during the interview of April 16, 2009, it was noted that the Examiner's comments in the Office Action appear to be directed to a previous version of claim 18 which does not include the amendments submitted in the response of October 28, 2008.

In particular, in the previous response filed on October 28, 2008, independent claim 18 was amended to recite that the multi-joint drive mechanism includes a flat-plate bone-member layer member in which a plurality of *flat plate bone members* are arranged in arrays, with *each of the flat plate bone members having at least one recessed portion*. In this regard, it is noted that the comments on pages 2-3 of the Office Action do not address the "recessed portions" of claim 18, and it is respectfully submitted that the Tureman reference does not disclose a flat-plate bone-member layer member in which a plurality of flat plate bone members are arranged in arrays, with each of the flat plate bone members having at least one recessed portion, as required by claim 18. During the telephone interview, the Examiner acknowledged that Tureman does not anticipate claim 18 because Tureman does not disclose flat plate bone members which each have a recessed portion. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 18 is not anticipated by Tureman.

Further, it is noted that Maeda does not cure the defects of the Tureman references as discussed above. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 18 is clearly allowable over the prior art of record. Further, it is noted that independent claims 27 and 32 include all of the limitations of independent claim 18, and should therefore also be considered to be patentable for at least the same reasons discussed above.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 18, 27 and 32, as well as claims 19-25, 28-30 and 33-40 which depend therefrom, are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

In addition, the Examiner's attention is directed to the dependent claims which further define the present invention over the prior art. For example, new dependent claims 38-40 each recite a plurality of drive sources, wherein each of the drive sources is arranged to drive flexural

motions of a corresponding one of the elastic members by expanding or contracting the corresponding one of the elastic members. It is respectfully submitted that the limitations of dependent claims 38-40 are not disclosed by the applied prior art.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. An early notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Kazuo YOKOYAMA et al.

/Walter C. Pledger/

By: 2009.05.06 16:35:55 -04'00'

Walter C. Pledger
Registration No. 55,540
Attorney for Applicants

WCP/lkd
Washington, D.C. 20005-1503
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
May 6, 2009